

Pain
Sermons
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FIRST
MISSIONARY ORATION,
AS DELIVERED, OR INTENDED TO BE DELIVERED,
BEFORE THE THREE UNIVERSITIES,
AND IN
VARIOUS CITIES AND TOWNS
OF
England and Ireland,
BY
THE REV. ROBERT TAYLOR,
BACHELOR OF ARTS, AND MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF
SURGEONS,
IN THE SUMMER OF THE YEAR
1829.

I speak as to wise men : Judge ye what I say.

1 *Corinth.*, x. 15.

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CRITICONS

FIRST
MISSIONARY ORATION,

&c. &c.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE nature of the invitation on which you are here convened, pledges on our part, a promise of matter worthy of your attention; as your attendance is the pledge on yours, of willingness to hear, candour to weigh, and equity to judge what we propound.

To be deficient of such weight of argument as might justify the call that we have made, would in us, be folly—I admit consummate folly: to want a liberality responsive to that call, would be a deficiency elsewhere, which as I name not, I fear not.

Men, Brethren, Intellectual, Intelligent, and Rational inhabitants of this—(*Great City*,*)—I appeal to your intellect, your intelligence and your reason.—Judge ye what I say.

The pencil of Raphael never pourtrayed a sublimer subject, nor could the mind of man conceive a more august spectacle, than that of man reasoning with men,—the orator in the assembly of the people,

“—————illum
quem mirabantur Athenæ
Torrentem, et pleni moderantem fræna Theatri.†”

“Whom Athens crowded theatre admired,
While with his voice, as with a rein he bent
Their ductile passions, and their pleased assent:‡”

* Ancient town, or University, as it may be.
† Juvenalis Satira 10, line 128.
‡ Owen's Poetical Version.

or, than your own Christian Demosthenes, the apostolic "Chief of Sinners," in the same Areopagus, addressing and remonstrating with the philosophers of Pagan Athens:—

Ἀγῶρες ἀθηναῖοι κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεῖσιδαίμονεστεροὺς ὑμᾶς θεῶ-
ρῶ, διερχόμενος γὰρ, καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβασμὰ ὑμῶν, εὐρον
καὶ βῶμον, ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγεγραπτο, ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ.*

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too religious, for as I passed by and observed your devotions, I saw an altar inscribed TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

Endured the men of Athens such an attack on their religion? And have Christians, and Christian assemblies, in all ages, admitted the full propriety and admirable fitness of such an appeal? cited it, as the noblest specimen of human eloquence—the best of reasoning, in the best of causes? and applauded the transcendent magnanimity of the man, who, like

—————" the seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he
Among innumerable false, unmoved ;
Unshaken, unseduced, untirify'd
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal,
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind?"

And shall an assembly, in an age of a thousand-fold the intelligence of the age of Athens, be found incapable of doing justice to a similar degree of virtue, offering precisely a similar argument.—"Ye men of ——— I perceive that in all things, *ye* are too religious. For I also have passed by, and have observed *your* devotions, and have seen *your* altars to—an Unknown God."

Suppose ye, that those men of Athens had exclaimed, "Who is this stranger?" Or had found reason enough for refusing to listen to him, in the answer that might have been given to that question. "This is Paul of Tarsus. This is that recreant from the faith of his fore-

* Acts xvii. 22. Spoken in the attitude of Raphael's Cartoon, *Paul preaching at Athens*. Griesbach's Greek—Archbishop Newcomb's translation.

fathers,—the Blasphemer, the Infidel—who, in the arrogance of his brain-sick vanity, hath changed his opinions, and expects the insulted world to change with him : who now professes the principles he once abjured, and would destroy the faith which once he preached : the Jew of yesterday—the Christian to-day ; that shall be the Jew again, when the sun bakes his head on the other side.”

Protect me, Sirs, with such an answer as yourselves would find to such a challenge : and let the shield which shall be broad enough to cover the advocate of one cause, retain its dimensions when spread over the advocate of another. Or take the alternative (if ye choose it the rather,) of maintaining that it was only from Pagans that liberality was to be expected ; and that when a man has become a Christian, he should no more listen to reason, nor be capable of justice.

Your Christian missionaries, Gentlemen, who, in the sincerity of their convictions, and the intensity of their charity, traverse the globe,

“ From realm to realm, with cross or crescent crown'd,
Where'er mankind and misery are found,”

to carry to them (as they conceive they carry,) “ the glad tidings of salvation, to bind up the broken heart and cheer the drooping mind,” deserve your applause, and *mine* ; and have it too : for “ I would applaud them to the very echo, that should applaud again.” They act like honest men. They act as becomes good men. For there is no greater goodness than in conferring benefits on others. They act as becomes wise men. For there is no greater wisdom than in laying out our lives, for the very end for which we live ;—to aid and serve mankind.

But applause, however merited, is but half the tribute I owe them. I will imitate the virtue I admire. I will equal it. I will transcend it. And transcend in such degree, that they themselves shall own my pre-eminence ; and I, *not* own that I have moved a finger in

this cause, till "I have been in labours more abundant than they all."

All that I demand shall be no more than the fairness which they themselves demand. Let even-handed justice weigh me out the same share of attention which they would think but reasonably to be granted, from those whom they expect to convert to the Christian faith. Let them not, themselves, put on the Christian faith, a worse indignity than it could possibly receive from me; that of being exhibited as the only faith under heaven—that will not brook opposition, and cannot abide controversy.

Let me at least experience from civilized and enlightened society, but only so much generosity as they would challenge from the barbarians, their hearers:

"From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of steel;
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
To offices of gentle courtesy."

And I will show to them, the divinity of an inspiring virtue in this bosom, the God within me; a confidence in this great cause, which dare trust it to the conflict of opinion; a zeal, the like of which never glowed, nor *could* glow, in any Christian heart. Achieve they their unenvied triumphs in the nurseries of infancy, or in the chambers of decrepitude and age, ere reason hath shone upon the mind, or after reason's candles have burnt out. Preach they to barbarous ignorance, uncultivated rudeness, and unquestioning impotence. Be they wise men, where only themselves are wise, and eloquent, where none may speak but they.

I seek the field of accomplished controversy, and challenge the collision of mind with mind. I call on men of the highest order of education, of most cultivated talents, most extensive research, and most laborious learning, to abide the juxta-position of their learning and of mine. *Nam et ego in Arcadia!* For all I offer, I stand on no higher ground, and none lower, than that on which the Roman orator achieved and held the

attention of a Roman audience; “ Num fingo? Num mentior? Cupio refelli. Quid enim laboro, nisi ut veritas in omni quæstione illustretur.”—“ Do I feign? Do I lie? I desire to be refuted: For wherefore do I labour, but that in every question, truth may triumph.”

Shall it be urged against me, that I come a stranger and an adventurer here, to disturb the intellectual repose of thousands who were perfectly at ease in the faith which I assail, in the belief of the doctrines which I impugn.

Why, so? *Then*, Sirs, light all the blame upon me, when it shall be shown that there is in reason a presumption, or in evidence a fact, to justify the presumption, that the thousands could not possibly be *most injuriously deceived*; or that it is not possible to be most injuriously deceived, and to be in a perfect state of repose at the same time.

But this not being shown, nor to be shown; condemn not that same principle of conduct on your right hand, which you profess to admire and revere on your left: and deem not *that* a vice in us, which you would account a virtue in any men, *but* us.

Had the repose of barbarous ignorance *never* been disturbed. Had the thousands, for whom it might with equal justice have been urged, that they were well enough at ease, and perfectly satisfied with the modes of thought which they had been brought up to entertain, never been induced to entertain any other modes of thought. Had scorn, and nought but scorn, been due to every attempt to emancipate men's minds from the thralldom of their prejudices. Had it been the duty of the more knowing and the better informed, to keep their better knowledge to themselves, to doff the bonnet to the tyranny of ignorance, and submit to the usurpation of imposture; the race of men might to this day have run wild in the woods from which they sprang; and though they would have been, (as all wild men are,) *vastly religious*, they would never have become rational.

The characteristic of *civilized* man, as distinguished from his catabank and ourang-outang brother of the forest, is not, to possess a perfect knowledge, nor to be free from error; but to be willing on *all* subjects, and at all times, to correct his errors, and to increase his knowledge. This he can only do, by submitting all his modes of thought to the test of comparison with other modes of thought, using his faculty of reason to reason with, and his two ears for the purpose for which nature gave him two—to hear on both sides. He who hath no mind to do *this*, to all intents and purposes, hath no mind at all, and however he may have cut his nails and shaved his beard, may still know himself to be a lineal descendant from John the Baptist.

Sirs—The very novelty, the manner, the arrangement, time, place, and circumstances under which we address you, (if not a *poursuivant* report of us and of our counsels,) prepare ye to expect, that we are not come to tell you *an old story*. Had we come to do so, you yourselves are conscious that we should have taken the pains, which those who tell old stories, never fail to take, *to keep all the telling to ourselves*:—and we are conscious, that we should have had no other pains to take.

No ignorance could be too gross, no fatuity too stolid in the advocacy of the cause, which, (without witchcraft) ye guess that we oppose; to have wanted the convenience of the largest public room in this town, or to have failed to draw together the largest auditory.

The only thing which men are afraid to hear, and are unwilling to *have* heard, is, (what they suspect that *we* have brought them,) *something worth hearing*.

Were it a missionary meeting? Were it a religious tract association, a Jew converting, gospel propagating, or bible circulating society; or any society or assembly of men in which gospel and bible interests were involved; you would see every means taken, fair or foul, to shut out and bar off the possible collision of adverse sentiment.

The presence of one suspected of being unfriendly to their proceedings, would be formidable; his attempt to offer them reason, would be terrible to them. They would send for the Philistines to be in readiness to bear him to the dungeon, if an honest man, but came to look on them; as knowing what they cannot but know, that he must think, and guessing what he would say, if he might speak the thing he thought.*

The guilty felon shrinks not with more conscious despair of his lost cause, from the ordeal of that cross-examination which should be about to puzzle his contrivance, derange his schemes, detect his falsehood, and drag him to the light of public refutation; than the advocates of what you are told is the cause of God and of God's word—shrink, quail, and shudder at the danger of being *found out*, at the hazard of abiding such a test as it was never any thing else but falsehood, that had reason to fear.

To be sure, say they, “our cause is that of omnipotence itself: 'tis founded on a rock, the everlasting rock of ages.” And I dare say, it *is*. But for all that; the confectioners very well know that their sugar-candy castles were never built to abide the warm breath of an Infidel.

Whatever other tests and trials Christianity and Christians may be said to have gone through in confirmation of their sincerity and truth, they never yet went through the trial of giving fair play to their adversaries, of submitting their opinions to the tests by which alone the validity of all opinions can be analyzed, and of dealing with the adversaries of their faith, as they would have the adversaries of their faith, deal with them.

Whatever weight may be due to the argument

* The committee of the Auxiliary Bible Society held at Freemasons' Hall, applied for officers at Bow-street, upon only seeing that the Rev. Robert Taylor and Mr. Carlile were present at their meeting on the 30th of April last.

inferred from stories "of ages long ago betid," of the martyrdoms incurred and sufferings endured, (as we are told by the venerable archdeacon who could not afford to keep a conscience,*) endured (to be sure,) by the primitive Christians in pledge of the sincerity of their faith, their

"unconquerable zeal,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what was more, not to be overcome :"

the merit of that argument, in all experience and in all observance of your immediate forefathers and yourselves, up to this very day, stands on the side, exclusively on the side of the opponents of Christianity, (as I wish to God it did not.)

But they, and they alone, are called to sufferings. They alone give evidence of the sincerity of their conviction in the voluntary abdication of station and affluence, and in the patient endurance of the most grievous wrongs. They alone are subject to have their names cast out as evil, to be disinherited of their family succession, to have their motives maligned, their characters aspersed, their fortunes pawned in recognizances and fines, their dear liberty taken from them, and the brightest meridian of their talents, shut up to shine upon the cheerless walls, that neither justice, law, or reason ever meant, but for felony and crime.

I'll say no more of this: but only ask ye, Sirs, to put it to your honourable hearts; upon any sort of evidence of sincerity that man could give to men, to settle the matter as ye will, whether the probability stands, that it should be your mitred prelates, and your cassocked priests, that are the honest men;—and WE, that are the hypocrites.

Or how say ye, Sirs, to the demonstration of fact, which you cannot but by a painful effort, exclude from

* This was the *avowed* sentiment of the celebrated Archdeacon Paley; and exemplified throughout the whole course of his life.—See his Biography, attached to his "Evidences of Christianity."

its command on your conviction, that if we advocated the cause which we oppose, and did so, either with the most egregious incompetence, the wildest fanaticism, or the most palpable hypocrisy; we should have had no occasion for characters—nor for abilities either. We should do it all the better, for the absence of every quality that is respectable in man; and should only have to tell you, that “the strength of God was made manifest in *our* weakness, and *his* wisdom in *our* folly.” Nobody would have suggested that you should suspect our motives: nobody would have been afraid of the impressions our harangues might produce on the public mind.

We might have been Swedenborgians, Southcotians, Muggletonians, Sandemanians, Jumpers, Dunkers, Shakers, and Quakers, Haldanites, Glassites, Kilhamites, Arminians, Socinians, Calvinians, Arians, Unitarians, Sabbatarians, Millenarians, any thing in the world, so we were but far enough off from being RATIONAL.

“The meanest peasant in the kingdom, the most illiterate, barbarous hind, in doating age or drivelling idiocy, would obtain a magistrate’s licence to go a preaching, and have liberty to disseminate his conceits, however absurd, preposterous, or wicked they might be; so they were but absurd, preposterous, and wicked enough, to pass for the inspirations of infinite wisdom.”*

The only case in which the magistrate would be cautioned to have an eye on the proceedings, and the clergy would be alarmed; would be on the possible coming forward of an honest man, who having discovered how miserably mankind have been deceived, dare run the hazard of their displeasure, for the generous purpose of undeceiving them.

Even such an one am I. And having after the prosecution of this purpose for many years, paid the ransom of this bold attempt, in the endurance of the

* The Author’s Defence on his Trial before the Lord Chief Justice in the Court of King’s Bench, Guildhall, October 24, 1827.

penalty of the law, for not having prosecuted it as by law I might have done; I return to it, as under sanction and allowance of law; I have dearly bought the right to do.

“*Not in a tone of sarcasm and coarseness such as*” I was alleged to have used, and such as I have suffered for having been alleged to have used, (and I dare say the lamb *did* foul the water and use very unbecoming language in the ears of the poor innocent wolf,) “*but by solemn, serious, and deliberate argument addressed to the minds of men capable of reasoning and judging of such matters, to endeavour to bring the Christian religion into disbelief.*” This is law. This is Lord Chief Justice Tenterden’s Court of King’s Bench law. This I paid for, in the endurance of the long wear and tear of nine thousand and ninety-six hours’ solitary confinement. This I bought, at a price, beyond what I can afford to pay for any thing more of the same commodity: and I give it you for nothing.

“*To endeavour in public assemblies to bring the Christian religion into disbelief—not in a tone of sarcasm and coarseness, but by solemn, serious, and deliberate argument, addressed to the minds of men capable of reasoning and judging of such matters.*”* (Oh, how perfect is my memory!) This I have a right to do. This right with all due reverence and respect for all other rights, I come here to assert and exercise. So that if there be in this assembly, any persons conscious of not being “*capable of reasoning and judging of such matters,*” or not capable of appreciating the merit of such “*solemn, serious, and deliberate argument,*” as I have to offer, I do beseech their honoured incapability, to protect itself from all offence, by leaving me, as far as *their* presence shall obstruct my vista, to address the friezes, cornices, and pilasters of this apartment, which

* See Lord Tenterden’s Charge to the Jury on the Author’s Trial for alleged blasphemy.

to my mind's conceit, would pay me a more flattering attention, and be quite as good judges.

To the intelligent, "*to persons capable of reasoning and judging of such matters,*" (and such alone seek I to reason with) whose professed faith in Christianity, should be thought to be founded on the convictions of their reason; I owe, and I most freely pay, the allowances I expected for myself, when up to an advanced period of my life, (somewhat too much advanced) I thought, and reasoned; and felt, and judged as they do.

For I have been—and as the sanctity of priesthood, once conferred, is held to be an indelible sanctification barring all subsequent apostacy, or unworthiness of the recipient, I am, against my will, I am *full of the Holy Ghost*—even a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.

From the sincerest convictions of an honest heart, I once preached the faith of *a divine Redeemer*. I have abjured that faith. My convictions are the reverse of what they were. Say, sirs! when a man finds that he cannot lodge his faith and his honesty together, in the same bosom, which of them it is, that he should give notice to quit.

For some seven or eight years, I officiated at the altars of the Established Church, whose holy orders still I hold; and with a measure of talent and ability which wanted not its recognition then, from those who will no longer find it convenient to have a memory; I won laurels in the Christian cause; and in the pulpits of London and its vicinity; and in my own at Midhurst, in Sussex; I filled those pulpits as a Minister of the Gospel, compared to any other Minister of the Gospel, neither inferior nor second, themselves being judges.

This plead I, only in conciliation of the prejudice that would give the authority of falsely arrogated claims to superior knowledge, and better means of information on the great question at issue, to those whose minds have settled down into a state of conviction, into which

my mind has entered as deeply as theirs; with the only difference, of not settling down into that state.

And while I accuse not them, of not having gone to the bottom of the argument; I claim excuse *from* them, for having dashed through the bottom, and come out at the other side.

But without a metaphor: *this* advantage is indisputably on our side; that the Christian Minister who has become an Infidel, cannot have failed to have brought over with him, all the means of knowledge which Christianity could give its advocates.

No rational man will talk of the possibility of any thing being to be known of the Christian religion, of which a Christian Minister could be ignorant.

“He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” But he must recollect that *that*, is a sort of witness he must for ever keep to himself, and with which, he has *no right*, as he has no power to command the conviction of another.

The apostate from Christianity, knows what it is to have been a Christian: has seen the country, has breathed its air, has conversed with its inhabitants, hath learned its language, hath conned its polity, hath proved and known, all that could be known of Christianity. But the Christian knows not what it is to be an Infidel, knows not the merit of the Infidel argument: and is afraid of nothing else on earth so much, as that he *should* know it.

On one side there has been a comparison made, and a judgment formed on that comparison—on the other, there has been no comparison, and consequently no judgment.

The self-same principle of implicit faith, which makes a man a believer in Jesus, would, under another line of latitude make him a believer in Juggernaut.

He who has embraced truth itself, without being at the pains of sifting it; only treats the diamond as he would treat the sand.

“ Puts truth and falsehood on the same level,
And serves his God, as he would serve the—*any thing else.*”

But would that well-informed, that deeply-thinking, and sincerely conscientious man; who, for himself, is entirely convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and who, in the strong language that such persons ever delight in, would be ready to seal his conviction with his blood, and to die if it might be a thousand deaths? Will *that* man say, that one whose convictions were the diametrically reverse of his own, who held Christianity to be as false, as he esteems it to be true, as great a curse as he esteems it to be a blessing, as infinitely mischievous, as he accounts it to be beneficial to mankind; should suppress *his* convictions, or be constrained by force or fraud to suppress them, should stand by and see deluded millions fleeced, cajoled, and cheated, and the neck of humanity trod into the kennel of fanaticism, to underprop the dignity of knaves, and consecrate the ravings of madmen?

Will *he* say that zeal, sincerity, and honesty, are only virtues, when enlisted in *his* regiment, and subservient to the schemes of his ambition?

Or would he say, that, should such a change of mind take place in *him*, the like of which, he hath seen take place in minds not inferior to his; he would, himself, upon that change, forthwith throw from him all the honourable sentiments that now animate his honourable heart, renounce all heroism of character, and become the submitting slave and truckling coward that he would have an Infidel to be?—

Why then, Sirs! by your own honour and honourable sentiments, judge ye the part which it should become a man to act (just for a moment on the supposition that the wheel of chance had once in a century thrown up such a man,) as in maturer life should have discovered that those things which he had once held to be true, were *not* true; that his simplicity had been imposed on, that in his state of unresisting infancy, he had been

inoculated with a disease fatal to thousands, but which, the fortune of his manhood's strength had happily thrown out of his constitution, and he had become restored to the happiness of a perfection of intellectual health, which only those who enjoy can appreciate or desire; but which to want, is to be somewhat more of the beast than of the man, to want all that gives dignity to reason, and sweetness to existence.

The sun itself in the visible heavens, is not more glaring to the eye than is the glaring fact of the unprecedented increase; the wide spread and unresisted march of Infidelity. Where, ten or twenty years ago, an Infidel was rarely to be met, now myriads may be encountered. Not a well-educated family is there in England, that numbers not among its members, an avowed, or a suspected Infidel: nay, not an individual is there who meets another whom he suspects of being more knowing than himself, but he suspects him at the same time, of being none the better Christian for his better knowledge.

The age of Puritanism, the times in which the expiring embers of fanaticism which smoulder among the indistinguishable rubbish of worn out conceits, were *first* kindled, compared to the happier day in these respects, on which *our* fate has thrown us, would make it seem that the mind of man was no longer what it was.

But medical science has ascertained the solution of this phenomenon. It is now *known*, that the human species are, and have been, subject to the reign of various diseases, which after having prevailed for ages, become gradually, and sometimes suddenly, or in the course only of one or two generations, entirely extinct.

On the extinction of these diseases, or men's becoming less liable to them than their ancestors had been; the *moral* as well as physical characters of men become capable of infinite improvement: and the sons and daughters of a more wholesome generation in finding themselves immune from the diseases which plagued

their forefathers, will find themselves in like degree superior to the conceits and follies which their diseases had entailed on them.

Thus the scrofulous knots and indurations which are found in the soft and pulpy substance of the lungs; and which being *there* situated, cause consumption and asthma; when the like obstructions block up the functions of the still softer and more delicate substance of the brain; do precisely, on the same law of physical action, produce the *religious character*, and that indisposition to take the pains of thinking, and that invincible indolence and lassitude of mind, which constitutes the essence of sincere faith.

These schirosities and tubercles of the brain, are found to be becoming every day of less frequent occurrence. The disease is on the retreat. The parts of the brain, so long impeded by these tumours, have been observed in innumerable instances, but most frequently in the prime of youth, or perfection of manhood, to have thrown them off, and thereby to have recovered their essential and healthy action. So that the happy individual, without any account that he can give of the secret workings of the *vis-medicatrix naturæ* for his deliverance, begins, as he supposes, to think for himself, and only having begun to think, is astonished that he should not have perceived before, the reality of things which his disease had obliterated his faculty of perceiving, and which have burst like the discoveries of a new sense, on his awakened capabilities.

Having as good a claim to the credit of competent information on these subjects, as the Royal College of Surgeons, can guarantee in those who hold the honour of its diploma; (which honour that learned body has conferred on me,) I am competent to stake that distinction in challenge of credit for the anatomical accuracy of the physiology on which I insist; and to avow that it is known to their august body, and to all phrenologists and anatomists, that the brain is subject to

these affections: and that these affections, and these alone, are the proximate causes of all the differences that appear in the development of religious character.

And I would put it to the conscientiousness of the most religious man on earth, who dare trust himself to contemplate his own anatomy; whether he be not conscious, that what he calls his religious frames and feelings, vary as his health varies; and that one-half of the strength of his faith, depends on the state of his nervous system, — and the other half too.

But not so, with those whose wicked trade it is, to inoculate men with this disease, who insert the deadly virus under the soft skin of unresisting infancy, who persuade the patient that the hectic flushes of the fever they have induced, are the bloom of health; that the ravings of his delirium, are the inspirations of infinite wisdom; that his madness is his happiness; that he would become a lost man if he were to recover his reason, and that those who seek to cure him, are his enemies.

These men, (indeed the greatest enemies of man, and as far as they themselves are uninfected by the plague they spread, of all mankind the worst,) have found it decent to spoon into the gaping mouth of scepticism, the composing draught of a pretence to HISTORICAL EVIDENCES. They have pretended that the Christian faith, was founded upon facts; that their figments were real personages; and that the miraculous events which they relate, were historical verities.

On this ground then, they may be met. On this ground, I come to meet them. If it be firm beneath their feet, what have they to fear? Can I unmake verities? Can I destroy facts? Can either *they* or *I*, make that which shall appear to be truth, appear to be false; and break down the everlasting distinctions between fact and fable?

If the truth be with them, even on their side, aye all on their side; in the opposition to which I call them; I am *more*, and more faithfully *the Minister of Truth*

than they are, paying the only homage that can be acceptable to truth, *showing her no favour*.

In the strength of these convictions, I was induced, after the failure of a similar attempt in Ireland, in which I hardly escaped from murderous violence; to institute in the metropolis, an arrangement for the purpose of calling together the most learned, pious, and zealous of my reverend brethren, and of all other conscientious and competently learned persons, to form what should be called THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY; in the weekly meetings of which, myself and they, should, (after the *alleged* most primitive and apostolical usage,) hold ourselves ready to reason with the people, to relieve the perplexities of scepticism, and encounter the objections of Infidelity.

I had the happiness of presiding, through the course of three years, at ninety-three public discussions; and had established the Areopagus of the Christian Evidence Society, on such a respectable foundation, as provoked assault of a more calm and calculating, but not less wicked character, than that from which I had escaped in Dublin.—Good Christian people were pleased to fasten their Christian accusations on me, and cast me into prison.

The Christian Evidence Society, under my auspices, my presidency, and my avowal, had put forth its MANIFESTO, in respectful challenge to all ministers and competently learned professors of the Christian religion, to come forward and disprove if they could, the FOUR GRAND PROPOSITIONS, therein maintained. To wit,

FIRST. That the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons, whose names they bear.

SECONDLY. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer.

THIRDLY. That the persons of whom they treat never existed, and (as in that proposition involved,)

FOURTHLY. That the events which they relate, never happened.

These *propositions*, which at any rate were either true or false: and if false—the more egregiously false, the more easily to be shown to be so: were encountered by the never-failing resource of tyranny, its power to punish. The strong arm of the law was called in: and three indictments for alleged blasphemy, were prosecuted to the ruin of the Areopagus, to the imprisonment of its founder, and to the breaking up of every thing, but of the virtue of a heart inspired with the love of truth; and with that love, with courage to maintain, and fortitude to suffer for it.

The gloomy hours of solitary imprisonment, afforded a leisure (which few men enjoy, and no man would wish) for the further prosecution of these important studies; and after the completion of a controversial work, entitled “SYNTAGMA” of the evidences of the Christian Religion, being a vindication of the *Manifesto* of the CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY: with the further diversion of supplying FIFTY LETTERS, on coincident subjects, to the weekly numbers of “THE LION,” my whole remaining energies and leisure were devoted to the solution of the great problem, that has for the last ten years, engaged my solicitude; and which had certainly never before been solved. That is,

If Christianity had not the origin which Christians have been taught to believe that it had, what was its origin?

Behold the answer! THE DIEGESIS.

THE DIEGESIS, or *first general narrative*, was the name of that religious romance, which the Egyptian monks, the Essenes or Therapeuts, read in the University of Alexandria, as a part of their divine worship; and had preached in the different colonies, or missionary stations which they had formed, in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossé, Thessalonica; and generally throughout the then known world, many years, ages, or certainly *any number of years* before the period assigned as that of the birth of Christ.

This DIEGESIS, was the first draught, from which our first three canonical Gospels, (and the thirty-nine apocryphal Gospels which are of still earlier date, than the canonical Gospels,) are *plagiarisms*: that is, compilations in which *the real fact* of their being no more than compilations, is *not acknowledged*; and the *false appearance* of being original compositions, is *set forth*.

This DIEGESIS, contained the substance of the Sanscrit romance of the *Incaruate God*, CHRISHNA, which the monks of Egypt had derived from their Brahminical ancestors. In accordance with their professed *Eclectic philosophy*; (which consisted of what they called “concentrating the rays of truth wherever scattered, throughout the world, into one bright focus,”) they amalgamated, or mixed up this Hindostanee romance, with the no less fabulous, but no less sacred adventures of the Phœnician God, YES, or *Bacchus*, a personification of the sun; whose name in full length, in Greek letters, and surrounded with the rays of glory, (the universal and never-to-be-mistaken emblem of the sun) constitutes to this day, the mystical three letters, I. H. S. on the altars and pulpit-cloths of our Christian pagodas.

Read but those letters, as what they are, *Greek*, and not Roman letters; and, I. H. S. is JES; and to this Greek name, attach only the *Latin* termination US, and you have the result, JESUS, the *monkish-latin* name of the Syrio-Phœnician BACCHUS. JESUS, and CHRISHNA together, make the compound JESUS CHRIST; whose whole story, life, doctrines, miracles and mysteries, were the subject matter of that *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, which was first called the DIEGESIS; and which DIEGESIS was read among the Therapeuts of Egypt, many years before the Augustan era, (that is, before the age which ill luck has fixed as that of the birth of Christ.)

This untoward admission has fallen from the highest and earliest authority that could be quoted on the subject; the great ecclesiastical historian EUSEBIUS

Pamphilus, in the 16th chapter of the 2nd book of his Ecclesiastical History; where, detailing the account which Philo, who was himself a member of the Therapeutan college, had given of the Therapeutan doctrines, at a time when Jesus Christ, (if such a person ever really existed,) could have been not more than ten years of age; he expressly states *his* opinion; that certain *DIEGESES*, which they called their *ancient writings*, contained the very matter of the gospels and epistles since constituting the New Testament.

Ταχα δ' εικος α φησιν αρχαιων παρ αυτοις ειναι συγγραμματα, εναγγελια, και τας των αποστολων γραφας, Διηγησεις τε τινας, (κατα το εικος,) των παλαι προφητων ερμηνευτικας, επιστολαι, ταυτα ειναι.*

The astonishment and confusion of Dr. Lardner, upon stumbling upon the threshold of this blue chamber, induced him to bang the door in the face of curiosity, and say no more on't: as it induced me, for that very reason, to prosecute the inquiry to all consequences that it might lead to, and proclaim the result which Lardner feared to look on.

I found that Dr. Lardner himself, had been constrained by overwhelming evidence, to admit, that every one of the epistles of the New Testament, had been written before any one of our four Gospels. Yet every one of these epistles implies the existence and universal acceptance of gospels, already known and believed *at* the time, and any time *anterior* to the time, when those epistles were written.

But the Gospel of St. Luke, the most respectable of the four that are deemed canonical, (in a passage whose sense by "a bald translation," eludes the observance of the unlearned reader,) expressly makes the admission that *that* gospel really *was*, and pretended to be no more, than, "*a setting-forth-in-order*," or more methodical arrangement of that self-same legend of the monks of Egypt—the *DIEGESIS*.

* Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 2, cap. 16, fol. ed. Coloniae Allobrogum, 1612, p. 60, ad literam, D. linea 6.

Επειδηπερ πολλοι επειρησαν αναταξασθαι ΔΙΗΓΗΣΙΝ περι των πεπληροφορημενων εν ημιν πραγματος; καθως παρεδσαν ημιν οι απ' αρχης αυτοπται και υπηρεται γενομενοι του λογου. Εδοξε κμμοι, παρηκολουθηκοτι ανωθεν πασιν ακριβως, καθεξης σοι γραψαι, κρατιστε θεοφιλε, ινα επιγυνως περι ων κατηχηθης λογων την ασφαλειαυ.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order the *DIEGESIS* of those things which *we very well understand*; and, so forth, I thought I might as well take it in hand too.”

I give therefore to the world, in the work which I have for these reasons, entitled the *DIEGESIS*, “a discovery of the origin, evidences, and early history of Christianity, never yet before, or elsewhere so fully and faithfully set forth.”

In this work, the demonstration is in every respect, perfect, and absolutely complete; That the writers of the four Gospels, are no such persons as Christians have been led to believe them to be; and consequently that Christians have been, and *are* deceived.

That the writings which pass as gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, (for critics have almost done with attempting to defend that of St. John,)* are only *versions* according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke; who each of them drew from some one, and the same; or from some different previously existing translation of the *DIEGESIS*.

As this *DIEGESIS* itself, long anterior to the epocha assigned as that of the birth of Christ, as it is demonstrated to be, was a rendering into the language of Egypt, of the original history of *CHRISHNA*, which was contained in the most distinguished of the eighteen *Puranas* of the Brahmins; that is, in that called the *BHAGAVAT PURANA*, which the Brahmins ascribe to the inspired pen of the sublime *VYASA*, who is stated to have flourished, (and astronomical observations

* Bretschneider, and our Bishop Marsh for that.

confirm the fact, that he flourished,) in Hindostan, fourteen hundred years, before the Christian era.*

This high antiquity of the story of CHRISHNA, had been admitted by the pious and learned Sir William Jones, (who had read the BHAGAVAT in the original,) in the most express terms, "that the name of Chrishna, and the general outline of his story, were long anterior to the birth of our Saviour, and probably to the time of Homer, we know very certainly."†

This date of *fourteen hundred years* before the commencement of the Christian era, had been announced in the *History of Ancient India*, and in the *Life of Chrishna*, published from a manuscript in the British Museum, by the learned and Reverend Thomas Maurice, (a conservator of that Museum,) as "*resting on solid ground of information.*"‡ Though afterwards, in a series of letters addressed to those *Right Reverend* and *Most Reverend* Fathers in God, the Lords, the Bishops, and Archbishops of the Episcopal Bench, he would, (with *reason enough*) recal an admission that would stand so awkwardly by the side of his other admission, that "*such is the series of parallel facts and passages, so strikingly consonant in many respects with those recorded of our Saviour, that every mind capable of a moment's reflection, MUST consider the former as imitations of the latter.*"§

The Brahmins are thus charged with being the forgers, without any conceivable motive why they should have forged, what they could as well have invented; and are alleged to have *vampt up* their evidence of the remoter antiquity, by an ingenious astronomical calculation of *back reckonings*.

But out, alas! for even this evasion! It can be shown, (and by the learned Professor *Playfair* of Edinburgh, it has been brought to proof,) that the Brahmins,

* Ibid, preface, p. 2.

† Asiatic Researches, vol. 1, p. 259.

‡ Preface to Indian Sceptic Refuted, 2.

§ Ibid, p. 110.

to have made such back reckonings, must have been well acquainted with the most refined of the theoretical improvements of modern astronomy, as discovered by Sir Isaac Newton, and perfected very lately by the philosophers of France. It has been established beyond all resistance of controversy, that the worship of *CHRISHNA*, was in general prevalence in India, in the time of Alexander the Great. The statue of this god is found in the very oldest caves and temples, throughout all India. Their churches were built in the form of crosses; and "the inscriptions in them, are in a language used *previously* to the Sanscrit, and now totally unknown even to the Brahmins themselves, as may be seen at this day, among other places, in the city of Seringham, and in the temple of Malvalipuram."*

Nor is it necessary to show that the monks of Egypt, who read the *DIEGESIS*, in their ecclesiastical establishment at Alexandria, and in all the missionary colonies they had formed, in Asia, Europe, and Africa; so many years before the Augustan era, had imported or adopted the foolish story of their *INCARNATE GOD*, from foreigners, or professors of a religion opposed to their own:

Nor even that "the Sublime *VYASA*," the scribe of the Bhagavat Purana, who is so clearly shown to have flourished fourteen hundred years before our date of the birth of Christ, was the first *author* of that evangelical romance:

Nor that there was ever any general importation or sudden adoption by one country of the superstitions of another; since the clearest astronomical calculations have been found to confirm the accuracy of the highest authorities of historical evidence—the testimonies of Herodotus, who flourished 484 years *before*, and of Pomponius Mela, who wrote only 45 years *after* our fictitious era—"that Egypt had been governed by a succession of Hindoo princes, for upwards of *THIRTEEN*

* *Diegesis*, p. 177.

THOUSAND YEARS; and had preserved astronomical annals for *one hundred and ninety-six thousand years*; and that, since the Hindoos came into Egypt, "*quater cursus suos vertissi, sidera ac Solem*"*—that *the Sun and Constellations had changed their courses four times*; that is, that the sun had passed through four signs of the zodiac: which, on the admission of its having passed through half the sign which preceded those four signs, and three-fourths of the sign which followed them, makes the *eleven thousand three hundred and forty years*, which Herodotus has assigned, *precisely*; it requiring 2160 years for the sun to pass backwards through a sign of thirty degrees, at the rate of seventy-two years to a degree.

These accuracies of astronomical calculation, are supported by the *fact* of the Hindostanee or Indian character still discernible in all the remains of Egyptian antiquity; and by the undesigned admissions of all who have had occasion to treat, or to allude to, the colonization of Egypt.

" Quaque pharetratæ vicinia Persidis urget
Et viridem Egyptum, nigra fœcundat arena
Et diversa ruens septem discurret in ora
Usque coloratus amnis, dexus ab Indis.†"

" For where with seven-fold horns mysterious Nile
Surrounds the skirts of Egypt's fruitful isle;
And where, in pomp, the sun-burnt people ride
In painted barges o'er the teeming tide;
Which pouring down from distant India's lands,
With darkened waters, fructifies the sands."‡

The Nile itself, from the dark colour of its waters, in the Sanscrit tongue is frequently called the CHRISHNA.§ And on its annual rising to the height of the transverse beam of the crosses, which were set up along its banks to ascertain the depth and extent of its inundation,

* Pomponius Mela, Book I. cap. ix. v. 97, which he takes from the Euterpe of Heroditus.

† Georgic iv. line 291.

‡ Dryden's translation a little altered.

§ Maurice's Indian Sceptic, p. 80.

would, in the strongly metaphorical language of the Egyptians, be naturally represented, as *Christna crucified* for their salvation.*

Thus, Sirs, have we proof demonstrative, proof irresistible, proof against which no counter proof can be, or be pretended, that the whole story of Jesus Christ, is nothing more than an *Eastern tale*; that no such person as Jesus of Nazareth ever existed; and that the whole system of religion, in any way associated with pretensions of *his* name and authority, is *false as God is true*.

And as in the solution of a quadratic, the discovery of the hidden quantity, relieves all the difficulties of the problem, unravels every possible involution, *dove-tails* into every angle, and leaves no room for doubt remaining;—so, have we in this great discovery, a satisfactory expliation of that entire want of historical evidence, under which the pretended *Jewish* origin of this “*exitiabilis superstitio*,” is found to labour; and reason enough, and more than enough, for the at length *detected* forgery of every passage of ancient history; that has been addueed to eountenance that pretension,

The Anaphora of Pilate to Tiberius,

The Correspondence of Christ and Abgarus,

The Inseription to Nero,

The Testimony of Phlegon,

The Admissions of Porphyry,

The Aeknowledgments of Celsus,

The Reeognitions of Josephus,

once the proud bulwarks of pretended Christian evidence, have been surrendered by Christians themselves, are no longer defended—no longer defensible.

The equivocal, (*in the highest degree equivocal*,) testimonies of PLINY and TACITUS, stand on the brink of the same fate. Not a vestige, not a trace remains to prove that the existence of Jesus Christ, *as a man*, had been so much as asserted, within the term of a hundred years of his alleged epiphany.

* The Diegesis, p. 206.

All accounts of such an *entity*, hitherto pretended, are distinctly traceable to the reckless hardihood of Christian forgery; and had been devised for the wicked purpose of making *that* appear to be true, which was *known not to be so*; for the purpose of administering fuel to the fever of fanaticism, and to bar off all advantages of an occasional lucid interval of reason: by setting up Romance upon the pedestal of History; and enforcing Reason herself to underprop the impostor's falsehood, and the madman's dream.

"Tanta fuit primis seculis fingendi licentia, tam prona in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides exinde graviter laboraverit"—is the admission of the most learned Fell, Bishop of Oxford: an admission of no more than any other Bishops would admit, as well as he; if with half his learning, they had inherited a quarter of his honesty.

"So great was the licence of forging; so desperate the rage of believing in the first ages; that the credit of any thing reported of those times, must have been hugely suspicious."

If it had been only with those who sincerely believe the Christian religion, that Infidelity had to contend; its victory would long ago have been won: but it is those who do *not* believe, that are its chief supporters. Our war is not with the faithful, but with the faithless: not against sincerity and simplicity, but against hypocrisy and fraud: not against the sheep, but against the wolves in sheep's clothing—those merciless wolves, who are always the persecutors of virtue, and the oppressors of innocence; who keep up *what they know to be untrue*, only because it keeps up them; and who work men's minds into the fever of religion, for the sake of putting out the eyes of their reason; and rendering them the dupes of their craft, and the vassals of their power.

To pretend any longer that Infidels insist only on arguments that have already been answered, or refuted; is to discover the grossest ignorance of what their argu-

ments really are, and *in* that ignorance to find the only excuse for what such a pretence really is—the grossest falsehood.

We have become better acquainted with the evidences of the Christian religion, than it was possible for the Lardners, Watsons, or Paleys of Christianity to have been.

We have means of information, which they had not.

We are in possession of intelligence, the result of more extensive research, of more impartial inquiry, and of more *recent discoveries*; which have disproved their statements, falsified their calculations, exposed their errors, and destroyed their systems.

To pretend, therefore, to refer the anxious mind for the solution of its doubts, to any defence of the Christian religion, in which these more recently emerged objections are unnoticed; is only parallel in absurdity and wickedness, to the sophistry that would pretend that there was enough to be learned of the sciences of *chemistry* and *medicine*, from the bulky folios of the alchemists and barber-surgeons, of a hundred years ago: and that it was impossible that any man of science of the present day, could be wiser than Paracelsus, Bombastus, Van Sweeten, and Boerhaave.

Men, Brethren, Inhabitants, (Citizens,) of this—*(as it may be)*—All I claim in the maintenance of the honourable challenge which I have given—the most honourable, that man could give, (or a better man than *he*, accept,)—is *Fair Play*; is your protection of that right in us, which you would justly assert for yourselves—the right of FREE DISCUSSION; that ye hold the balance righteously in weighing the merits of the arguments I have offered, and of those whose powers of refutation I come here, to seek, to court, and to engage.

If Christianity be founded in truth, it hath existed long enough to show what it could do to make mankind wiser and happier than they might otherwise have been.

If it be founded on fallacy and fable, it must at least

be time enough to try the experiment whether they might not be as wise and happy as they are, without being deceived; without being gulled into virtue, and kept within the bounds of morality, by impositions practised on their understandings.

And be we never so wrong, in thus traversing the country to give your clergy so much labour to counteract our sophistries, to expose our ignorance, and to preserve the precious immortal souls of their flocks from the poison they charge us with endeavouring to disseminate; at least we are not laying that additional labour, on those who can decline it under any plea that their shoulders were breaking down before, and that they were *over-earning* the wages of the vineyard.

All I ask is, credit for being actuated by motives of the sincerest charity to all men, upon my mind's *sincerest conviction*; which I have already borne to judgment and to prison; and which I am still ready to bear "*to prison and to death*:" and the determined purpose of my heart, upon that conviction, never to surcease from being the assailant of Christianity; nor to do less than the utmost that I can, to wean all minds from it, and to set all hearts against it.

Great Cause of all effects! if thine all-pervading Essence be conscious of the wonders it produces; and if to thee, "all hearts be open, all desires known, and *from* thee, no secrets can be hid;" and *thou* hast seen in this heart, a thought or purpose that could justly make a creature thou hast made, hostile to me—let not thy mercy spare, but let thy justice strike.

" If I am right, thy grace impart,
Still in the right to stay;
If I am wrong, O teach my heart
To find that better way."

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